

A History of the Lakehead Amateur Radio Club
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Author's explanatory note: This is the first of a series being written primarily as a record of the Club's formation and activities. It is intended for publication in the news media. This will explain the occasional entry or remark obviously intended for the layman.

Part 1

In April of 1934, a number of amateur radio operators from Fort William and Port Arthur gathered together in the Fort William YMCA for the purpose of organizing a Club. The purpose being to further their interest in a common hobby by mutual cooperation. There were twenty Charter members present at this meeting. The Charter President was Mr. Pat O'Shea - VE3FW, of Fort William, who was still an active radio amateur at the time of his death in March 1972. In amateur parlance he became a silent key.

The original name of the Club was "Canadian Lakehead Wireless Experimenters". The meeting place was, for some time, the Fort William YMCA then moved to a Club room (*shared with the Camera Club*) at the old Kam Club on George Street.

Due to the outbreak of World War n in 1939, the use of amateur equipment was suspended by Government decree. Club activities ceased.

Following the War, a meeting was called (in the Lorna Doone Restaurant) in November 1945 for the purpose of re-organizing the Club. Twenty-five members attended.

Meetings were held once per month in various locations, a favourite place for dinner meetings being the Lorna Doone. At this time, the cost of equipment was prohibitive for most of the members. If one wished to become an active "ham" and communicate with others, be they local or worldwide, it was a case of "roll your own". Activities were divided into building receiving and transmitting sets and in practising the Morse Code. A speed pf 10 words per minute is required to qualify for a Government Certificate of Proficiency which is required before an amateur is allowed to operate radio equipment. Examples of home built sets can be seen on display at the Thunder Bay Museum.

One of the highlights of the year in amateur activities is the annual Field Day in June. This is an international affair in which amateurs allover Canada and the USA pack equipment and go out into the wide open spaces. The receiving and transmitting sets together with aerials and cables with portable generator plus tents and don't forget the food, are all transported to a suitable site outside the city. At a specified time all stations go on the air and for a period of twenty-four hours endeavour to communicate with as many stations as possible. In this way a great deal of experience and "know-how" is gained in the setting up of equipment and handling of messages. Amateurs are thus prepared to render assistance in case of emergency.

The first Field Day held at the Lakehead was in 1948. On this occasion ten members attended the

site on Mount Baldy. At that time, most amateur sets were battery operated. It was therefore no mean chore to man-handle a total of five transmitters and receivers, plus aerials and tents plus SIXTEEN storage batteries. The records from this Field Day state they were in continuous operation for forty-eight hours following the transportation of all the gear. This was a most strenuous outing. Contacts were made with thirty-eight different stations. Of the crew that took part, three of the operators are still active local amateurs in 1973. (*Bill Roberts - VE3ARN/7 is the sole remaining crew member still active in 1995.*)

LARC